

# life

Issue 7 | Summer/Autumn 2019

Firmager Funeral Service

in the community with  Funeral Partners

Helping to  
save lives

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# Sam Kershaw

## Chief Executive Officer

Sam Kershaw took over as Chief Executive Officer of Funeral Partners in January 2018, having joined the business in 2016 as Chief Operating Officer. Sam has over 35 years' experience in the funeral profession, having worked his way up from Trainee Funeral Director to senior management.

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Our summer/autumn issue of Life in the community shines a light on the care provided by our funeral teams which goes unobserved behind the scenes.

This behind the scenes care for families' loved ones is sacrosanct. It is part of the ethos of Funeral Partners that we behave as respectfully, if not more, towards the deceased in our care in the back of house as we do in our front of house activities.

We have invested millions of pounds in our funeral homes across the country over the last three years, ensuring our mortuaries, refrigeration and embalming facilities are of the highest possible quality.

We continue to invest in staff training which clearly demonstrates the way we expect our staff to act and behave around the deceased.

When I visit our funeral homes, I am humbled by the deep-rooted care and commitment provided by our teams to the families and communities they serve. This frequently goes above and beyond their roles as Funeral Directors and Arrangers.

Their support for local organisations, charities and causes is highlighted in every issue of Life in the community, but this issue also highlights other roles they undertake, from coastguards to volunteering at youth groups or training as bereavement counsellors.

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*When I visit our funeral homes, I am humbled by the deep-rooted care and commitment provided by our teams to the families and communities they serve. This frequently goes above and beyond their roles as Funeral Directors and Arrangers.*

Many of these roles give them a deeper understanding of how best they can support grieving families in their work in the funeral profession. Helping families to arrange a funeral which reflects the life and character of their loved one is part of supporting them through the bereavement process.

It is important for our teams to understand bereavement and to be able to signpost families to sources of support in their local communities. This understanding of the role of the funeral profession, and the equal

importance of the observed front-of-house service and the quality and respect provided back-of-house, is something we continue to share with the Competition and Markets Authority during its ongoing investigation into the whole UK funerals market.

We are proud to share the same goals - providing families at a most vulnerable time with a professional, fair, and transparent service of the highest quality.”

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# Henry Ison & Sons restores paupers' grave

A Kenilworth memorial to 17th century paupers has been restored by Henry Ison & Sons Funeral Directors.

The mound of sandstone on the grass verge of the Warwick Road had deteriorated to such an extent that a Kenilworth Town Councillor approached the local branch of Henry Ison & Sons, just half a mile from the memorial, to see if they could repair it.

Funeral Arranger Jenny Ireland worked with their stonemason G H Davies & Son to restore the memorial known as Betsy's Grave, where paupers who had died were left by the neighbouring parish of Leek Wootton which was unwilling to pay for their funerals.

Jenny said: "Betsy's Grave reminds us of a dark period in Kenilworth's history. The new memorial will remind people of this tragic part of the town's past and enable them to reflect on how well the deceased are looked after nowadays."

The sandstone mound had remained unmarked until 2011, when Henry Ison & Sons laid a memorial headstone marking

the boundary between Kenilworth and Leek Wootton which described it as Betsy's Grave. Originally some thought the grave was named after an individual called Betsy, but historians say it represents the abandoned paupers of that Elizabethan era.

Kenilworth Town Councillor and former Mayor Kate Dickson said: "It's important to keep links with the past for future generations and we're thankful Henry Ison & Sons stepped in to support our local community."

Historian Graham Gould, who has been campaigning for the repairs, said: "We're losing so much heritage in Kenilworth to new projects and planning permissions.

"When Henry Ison & Sons saw we were raising awareness for Betsy's Grave, they said they'd fix it and pay for it. I'm delighted."



From left to right: Councillor Kate Dickson, Funeral Arranger Jenny Ireland, local historian Graham Gould and stonemason Guy Wright admire the newly improved Betsy's Grave



## REWIND to 1959



**B Matthews Funeral Directors** put on a 1959-themed tea party for the Southampton community to celebrate its 60th anniversary.

The branch parked a classic 1959 Mini out front while Funeral Arranger Gill Silsbury created a board displaying 1959 highlights, including chart-topper Elvis Presley and the creation of Barbie.

Local charities University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust and

CommuniCare as well as Southampton City Councillors Dave Shields and Satvir Kaur were among those enjoying refreshments. The local DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel also arrived later in the day with cookies.

Gill said: "I've been here just over a year but this event really brought home that I've made an impression in the area.

"Some contacts I've made over the year are from a local breakfast networking group at Sunrise Senior Living and others are from

working with the local community. I'm so glad everyone had a great time."

Jonathan Wait, Area Development Manager for Funeral Partners, added: "B Matthews still demonstrates the values it was founded and built on 60 years ago, serving Southampton and the surrounding areas as the funeral directors respected and trusted by so many for so long. This has been demonstrated recently by being voted one of the top three funeral directors in Southampton."

# Five established businesses join Funeral Partners family

Five respected funeral businesses have been welcomed into the growing Funeral Partners family.

**Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors** of Greater Manchester, **Quinns of Greasby Funeral Directors** of The Wirral, **George Steele & Son** of West Yorkshire, **G & M Goold Funeral Directors** of Chester and **L C Hill and Son Funeral Directors** of Wiltshire have become the latest high-quality businesses to strengthen Funeral Partners' presence across the country.

## G & M Goold Funeral Directors Respected Chester family business

Family business **G & M Goold Funeral Directors** is proud and passionate about the service it has provided to the community of Vicars Cross in Chester for the past ten years.

Husband and wife Geoff and Mandy Goold plan to continue offering their personal, family-oriented service as part of the Funeral Partners network.

The couple have worked tirelessly to grow the business and its excellent reputation, supported by Mandy's sons Dan and Mike. Mandy explained: "Geoff and I don't want the business to change, we want it to carry on offering that high quality, personal service.

"Although it is no longer independent, it's still very much a family-run funeral directors. We looked at Funeral Partners' ethos and they will let our business run in the same way we have run it.

"We want families to know our service won't change."

Geoff has been a Funeral Director for 35 years and met Mandy through working in the profession. After they married, Geoff's parents gave them the belief, encouragement and financial support to set up G & M Goold.

"They definitely saw it become a success," said Mandy. "We're very proud of what we've achieved in such a short time."

The business expanded into the neighbouring shop, enabling Geoff and Mandy to provide homely, welcoming premises. "People ask if we live here because it feels like someone's home," Mandy said.

Mandy's children grew up in Vicars Cross, attending the local nursery and primary schools just yards from the funeral home.

Both Dan and Mike served in the Army before joining the business. "The people of Vicars Cross have seen the children grow up and serve their community and serve their country, and they will remain as the faces of the business," Mandy said.



Funeral Director Damian Eyres at L C Hill and Son

## L C Hill and Son Funeral Directors Established Wiltshire family business

**L C Hill and Son Funeral Directors**, which has served the communities of Mere and surrounding districts for over 65 years, was founded in 1952 by Leonard Charles Hill and is currently run by his son Ray Hill and his wife Val.

Ray started working with his father before he left school and has served the local community 24 hours a day for over 60 years. He has lived in the area all of his life and served on Mere Town Council for over 40 years. Ray and Val plan to retire but will remain associated with the business.

Funeral Partners' Regional Development Director Peter Dearing said: "Ray and Val are well known and respected throughout the community, and we are delighted to welcome them. Funeral Partners is now investing in refurbishing the funeral home and chapel of rest.

"The business will establish close links with F Curtis & Son Funeral Directors of Warminster whose Funeral Director Damian Eyres will work with L C Hill and Son."



Geoff & Mandy Goold



## Elizabeth Way & Company Funeral Directors

### Community-focused Greater Manchester business

Elizabeth Way & Company, with funeral homes in Mossley and Bardsley, Oldham, was established in 2007 by Gail Willington, who had a long career as a nurse and fulfilled a childhood ambition by extending her caring role into the funeral profession.

Gail, who was born and brought up in Stalybridge, Greater Manchester, gained qualifications in funeral directing and arranging and built up the business. Gail will remain with the business as a consultant alongside Funeral Directors Anthony Barton and Tami Peel.

Praising Funeral Partners' family-oriented approach, Gail said: "The business will continue to serve local families in the way that it has for the last 12 years. Funeral Partners has that family feel and will support and develop the business to go from strength to strength."

With Gail's lifelong commitment to caring roles, Elizabeth Way has supported child bereavement counselling, provided training for local hospices and Macmillan nurses and hosted a Death Café encouraging people to talk about dying.



The Elizabeth Way & Company team, from left, Tami Peel, Anthony Barton, Gail Willington

## George Steele & Son

### 100 years serving West Yorkshire

A century of tradition and four generations of the same family are etched into the history of West Yorkshire funeral business George Steele & Son.

David and Christine Steele with their son Richard have served the communities of Ossett, Horbury and surrounding areas, trading from their Joiners and Funeral Directors business for most of their lives.

With David having worked in the business for nearly 70 years, the family were keen to maintain the respected name and reputation of the business and secure its future by choosing Funeral Partners.

The business was taken over by Richard's great grandfather Frank Burn, an experienced cabinet maker and undertaker, in 1919.



The family team, from left David, Richard and Christine Steele

David's father George Steele re-named the business, which David joined after leaving school. The family have lived on the site adjoining the chapel of rest and workshop since George Steele became proprietor.

Richard and his parents will remain as consultants and are looking forward to the business' future success with Funeral Partners. Richard said: "We were very keen for the name George Steele & Son to continue. Funeral Partners have been sympathetic to maintaining our family traditions, it feels more like being affiliated or being a member of Funeral Partners rather than a larger company."



The Quinns team at their Greasby funeral home. Lesley Quinn is fourth from left with sister Angela Dallinger and Angela's daughter Heather to her right

## Quinns of Greasby Funeral Directors

### Sixty-year-old Wirral family business

Long-established family business Quinns of Greasby Funeral Directors, run by sisters Lesley Quinn, Angela Dallinger, Tina Morris and Michelle Clark, was established in The Wirral by their late father David Quinn in the 1950s.

Originally a carriage master and bearer based in Greasby, David Quinn established the funeral business from his home in the 1960s in partnership with his wife Julie, moving to Greasby Road in 1966.

Eldest daughter Lesley helped out while she was still at school. She gained management experience in several businesses and community projects before returning to work with her father in 1982.

David Quinn took over Whelan's Funeral Directors of West Kirby, after the owner's death and opened his third branch in Hoylake in 1982.

The four sisters are now supported in the business by Angela's daughter Heather. Lesley Quinn said: "As a family-run business, we have a really good team and have made a success of Quinns by going the extra mile for bereaved families.

"Funeral Partners will protect the heritage of our business and we can continue to provide the same levels of service while gaining protection for our future."

# A peek behind the scenes

Every industry has unsung heroes and funeral arranging is no exception. Behind the scenes, Funeral Partners' experienced embalmers give the same level of care and attention to families' loved ones as our Funeral Directors and Arrangers provide.

*Life in the community takes a look at the back of house facilities which often remain behind closed doors.*



Attention to detail and pride in his work typify Kenny Read's approach to his role as embalmer at **John G Hogg Funeral Directors** in Sunderland.

Kenny always bears in mind the impact his role can have on the bereaved families whose loved ones are in his care. He explained: "Hearing positive feedback from families and colleagues makes me very proud of what I do. What I find rewarding about my job is when I have finished embalming, dressed the deceased and placed them in the coffin ready for family and friends to view."

It is important to understand the family's wishes in terms of clothes, make-up and hair styling to ease the experience of saying goodbye to their loved one.

Kenny explains that this can prove difficult: "Challenges can arise depending on the cause of death, and how the family wants the deceased to be dressed." He also highlights the importance of strict hygiene and health and safety standards.

Kenny completed an engineering apprenticeship before becoming an embalmer, qualifying as a diesel fitter plant engineer. But embalming caught his eye after spending several years in the funeral industry helping others.

He remembers: "As one of my colleagues, the previous embalmer, was leaving the job I was asked if I had thought about becoming an embalmer myself. I saw it as an opportunity to expand my knowledge of helping others and signed up."

Lindsey Phipps, embalmer at **Henry Ison & Sons** in Warwickshire, also joined the funeral industry with a passion to support people, which she developed through her background in care.



Kenny Read



Funeral Service Operatives Robert Dean and Jose Ruiz at E Sargeant & Son Funeral Directors' facilities in Berkshire



FSO Emma Jones at E Sargeant & Son Funeral Directors

“  
Our Jewish  
community is  
wonderful and they  
trust me, my branch  
is there for them.”



Diane Young

She said: “Before I became an embalmer I looked after adults with learning difficulties, supporting them with the skills they need to live independently in the community.”

Lindsey was also fascinated by the human body and specifically the changes it went through after death. She explained: “I wanted to learn more about the process. So I wrote to funeral directors, got an interview and have been embalming ever since.”

Like Kenny, Lindsey is passionate about providing high quality care to the deceased. She can't stress enough the importance of top-notch facilities for embalming over her 19 years of experience.

“When your mortuary is kept to the highest standards of cleanliness it makes it easier to provide the individual levels of care and respect each family has the right to expect for their loved one,” she said. “You need well-ventilated, well-equipped mortuaries.”

Such back of house facilities usually remain out of sight to visitors but that's no excuse for funeral branches not to keep them as good as new. Julian Hodgkinson, Regional Development Director of Funeral Partners North, oversaw the acquisition of **Howards Funeral Directors** in Southport just after owner Carl Howard spent £600,000 on refurbishments. This bought temperature-controlled units for 52 deceased, stainless steel embalming facilities, a mortuary fully clad in white UPVC and marble flooring.

Julian reasons: “As a funeral provider we should be confident that if a member of the public requested to see our back of house facilities they would meet all of their expectations – modern, clean, respectful.”

Julian lists space, tidiness, cleanliness “and a genuine feeling of the care we provide to the deceased” as the most important features the back of house can provide.

This is especially true for Diane Young, Funeral Director of **William H Painter Funeral Directors**, Yardley, in Birmingham, which installed Jewish back of house facilities last January featuring a Jewish-only washroom, where a special candle is lit upon entry, and a designated area visitors can place their outdoor clothing.

Diane said: “The Jewish community has specific but basic needs for their back of house facilities, however, many places don't offer them. So we put a lot of investment into ours.”

Diane invited a local Rabbi and synagogue committee to voice their needs when installing back of house facilities in her previous funeral directors. She then moved to William H Painter after 14 years of serving the Jewish community and found many members of the community followed her.

Diane said: “Our Jewish community is wonderful and they trust me, my branch is there for them.”

The back of house is more than anything a true test of a branch's commitment to families and their loved ones.



# Community pinboard

## Café takes customers down memory lane

A café with a difference has been launched by the caring team at **Wm Dodgson & Son** Funeral Services in Leeds.

Down Memory Lane Café runs once a month to support those living with dementia and their families, with residents from local nursing homes also invited for a cuppa and cake.

The team converts the catering and training room at Lupton Avenue, Harehills, to a tearoom, run by Funeral Arranger Helen Phelan and supported by Tim Ward from St Chad's Church. Helen bakes a batch of cakes and provides games and activities designed to stimulate positive memories.

The initiative was launched after staff from Wm Dodgson and neighbouring G H Dovener & Son Funeral Services, both part of Funeral Partners, were trained as Dementia Friends, an Alzheimer's Society initiative to raise awareness and understanding of the condition.

Wendy Ambler, Area Development Manager, who has previously raised thousands of pounds for the Alzheimer's Society, explained: "My mum struggled with day to day tasks and needed to be cared for in a nursing home to help my dad to cope.

"She struggles with strangers and they don't always understand how to talk to her. I wanted my branches to be a haven for anyone that needs a friendly place that they know they will be safe."



Funeral Arranger Lee Austin and Tim Ward from St Chad's

## Supporting the vulnerable with meals and clean clothes

**Ashdown Funeral Service** in Belvedere and Sidcup, Kent, gathered impressive donations from local Funeral Partners branches for a local charity for the vulnerable.

Funeral Arrangers Kelly Smith and Clare Cornwall received clothes, toiletries and food from Pinks Funeral Directors and other branches in the south east for Woolwich Service User Project (WSUP). The pair also contributed two cars full of their own donations and those of family and friends.

Kelly and Clare then volunteered at the charity's two-day-a-week shelter, which saw people from all walks of life get a clean change of clothes, meals and support.

The pair advertised their collection with a window display in their branch and rallied the support of their colleagues in nearby branches.

Kelly said: "The support was amazing and everyone really came together. We will be doing this again.

"The centre only has two washing machines and has to facilitate washing clothes for a large amount of people, which means that some were turned down. Myself and Clare will be holding a quiz night to raise money for WSUP so they can get a new machine."

Kelly Smith at Ashdown Funeral Service



**To find your local branch visit**  
**[www.funeralpartners.co.uk](http://www.funeralpartners.co.uk)**



## Wolverhampton turns out for fashion show

**Roy Quinton Funeral Directors** and Sunrise Senior Living in Tettenhall united the Wolverhampton community – supported by the local MP – for sparkling seniors and raised over £1,500.

Funeral Arranger Jill Holmes helped host a Sip and Shop ladies fashion show at Sunrise of Tettenhall in June to tie in with Ascot's Ladies' Day.

MP Eleanor Smith and ex-Deputy Mayor of Wolverhampton Alan Roberts were among the 89 ticket holders, with sales totalling £1,513 for local church St Michael's and All Angels.

Jill said: "We jointly decided our local church would be an ideal cause. They attend Sunrise and support the residents, while I often arrange funerals at the church."

Jill, who approached mother-daughter business Belle Fashion in Bridgnorth to make the clothes for 12 models, added: "It was a fabulous event. Sunrise provided canapes and drinks, the clothes were stunning and local businesses were so generous with gifts for the raffle."

Last year Jill also arranged a charity fashion show, one of several events she has organised with Sunrise. She summarised: "It is an amazing community to be involved with. When Sunrise asked me to help organise a charity fashion show I jumped at the opportunity – we all love a bit of glamour."



## Quiz night supports Thames Hospice

**E Sargeant & Son Funeral Directors** edged closer to its £50,000 five-year donation target for Thames Hospice by hosting a quiz and raffle.

The quiz, which was held at the home of Slough Town Football Club, Arbour Park Stadium, was a roaring success – selling 98 tickets and raising over £1,500 towards this year's £10,000 fundraising commitment set by the funeral directors.

The event was well supported by the local community and businesses, who donated some fantastic prizes for the raffle. Slough Town Football Club donated a football shirt and signed football.

Raffle prizes were kindly donated by Tesco in Slough, independent industrial products store Buck & Hickman and funeral supplies company Allsop.

Cadets from the RAF Air Cadets 153 Squadron supported the evening as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award and quiz participants enjoyed a superb meal provided by The Drunken Fish from nearby Datchet.

Mark Clements, Area Development Manager, said: "It was a delight to see so many people, organisations and companies from the local community helping to support our quiz night."

## Winning golf in friend's memory

**John Blenkiron & Sons Funeral Directors** in North Yorkshire won the Stuart Rasbeary Memorial Cup at Richmond Golf Club, raising over £3,000.

Carl Tate, Shaun Bruce, Brook Watson and Ben Hodgson helped raise £3,776 for blood cancer charity Bloodwise through their participation in the charity tournament.

The tournament was in memory of Stuart Rasbeary, who lost his fight against leukaemia in May 2017. Carl knew Stuart well from their school days and arranged his funeral.

Carl said: "It was a huge shock when we heard he had passed away and it was a great honour to be asked to enter a team in the golf day. We will continue to support the work of Stuart's friends and family to raise funds for this amazing charity."

The foursome bagged first place despite the morning downpour and windy afternoon. Carl summarised: "The whole team played magnificently. Shaun Bruce and Brook Watson played well with their short game and myself hitting some long drives helped the team through."

The team plans to enter the tournament next year to maintain their champion status.





# Supporting families through grief and bereavement

Families and individuals who visit our funeral homes across the country are usually dealing with grief and loss, and bereavement is a very personal and often bewildering experience.

Our funeral professionals have been exploring different ways of providing enhanced bereavement support.



## A new way of thinking about dying



Going the extra mile to support families and individuals dealing with terminal illness prompted Funeral Director Becky Perry to start training as an End of Life Doula.

While the concept of a doula is more commonly associated with preparing for a birth, doulas can also be trained to support people at the end of life.

The organisation Living Well Dying Well promotes more open discussion about death and has established a training programme

to equip people to take on a supporting role – providing practical, emotional and spiritual support.

Becky, who works at **Chris White Funeral Directors** in Salisbury, explains: “The role is very much that of a co-ordinator – they may be co-ordinating friends and family to help with the cooking, washing and ironing and co-ordinating medical equipment needed in the house to enable a death at home.

“A lot of people want to die at home but they don’t always have someone to help co-ordinate the arrangements and support their family leading up to death and the death itself. The End of Life Doula offers a holistic approach, providing clear thinking, information about what to expect and emotional support to the person who is terminally ill and their family.”

Becky has completed the Foundation stage of doula training and is quick to stress that she is not yet a fully qualified doula. But her training has already enabled her to have more informed conversations with doctors, community nurses and other palliative care providers.

“It’s opened up my eyes to how I can bring people together and get the community working better together to give people a good death. The skills I’ve gained will help me to support families and individuals to create the best death possible and help them to cope better.”

Becky explained that when she first started working in the funeral industry 15 years ago, funeral directors were rarely involved in discussions and providing support prior to a death. But with the increasing popularity of pre-paid funeral plans, families are seeking support earlier when faced with a terminal illness.

She said: “I felt I needed more knowledge to provide families with that support – that’s why I asked Funeral Partners if I could do the doula course – it helps to put the focus on death back in the hands of the community and to make it less frightening by looking beyond the medical side.”

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*The skills I’ve gained will help me to support families and individuals to create the best death possible and help them to cope better.*





Karen Rattigan

## It's ok to not be ok

Supporting her sister-in-law after her nephew was killed at the age of 23 prompted Karen Rattigan to train as a Cruse Bereavement Counsellor 16 years ago.

Karen, who is now a Funeral Arranger at **Pinks Funeral Directors** in Hamsey Green, near Croydon, explained: "I was with her every day trying to help and to say the right things and I approached Cruse for support."

She undertook a three-month training programme and became a face-to-face counsellor, visiting people needing bereavement support in their own homes.

Karen said: "The training covered all types of bereavement including sudden death, child death and end-of-life. It gave you the skills to listen and to help people through their grief for as long as they needed support, to help them to learn to live with it.

"There's no time limit on grief, even 20 years later there will be emotional triggers. It is about normalising grief, encouraging

conversations and openly talking about it and the person who has died.

"One change has been the increase in cremations which means families cannot go to the graveside to grieve. We advise people they need somewhere they can go to grieve."

Karen, who previously ran a social club at the Sacred Heart church in Croydon, continues her work with Croydon Cruse as a member of the telephone team. Since joining Pinks, she offers those who may be waiting for a visit from a Cruse counsellor the option of popping into the branch for a comforting chat or practical support.

In September she plans to start a monthly Bereavement Support group in her branch with Cruse counsellors on hand, and she also offers bereavement seminars at local care homes. Karen said: "People need to be able to talk about death, it is still such a taboo."

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*It gave you the skills to listen and to help people through their grief for as long as they needed support, to help them to learn to live with it.*

## Tea and a chat with M L Williams and Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

**M L Williams Funeral Directors** in Ayr is working with Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland to provide monthly awareness sessions about dealing with grief.

The free drop-in support sessions offer information and a sympathetic ear to any member of the local Ayrshire communities who has been affected by the loss of a loved one.

The sessions take place on the last Wednesday of every month. Specially trained volunteers from Cruse Scotland are available to answer questions, share information about services and support and discuss feelings about grief with those directly affected and those who wish to

support others.

Daryl Cuthbert, National Volunteer Development and Training Manager for Cruse Scotland, says: "Cruse Scotland is delighted to be working with M L Williams Funeral Directors in this important community initiative.

"Grief is something which we are all likely to experience, so the opportunity to ask questions about grief, collect information, or even just reach out to connect with others across your local community is important for our ongoing wellbeing.

"This local initiative is an example for other communities to take inspiration from."



Fraser Mackay

The team at M L Williams is also available to provide information about planning a funeral or celebrating the life of a loved one. Operations Manager Fraser Mackay says: "Working with Cruse Scotland allows us to provide an additional level of care and support to our local families. Those who have come along have said that it's a lovely idea and just what the area has needed."

## Funeral Partners works with National Bereavement Service

Funeral Partners is working in partnership with the National Bereavement Service to provide a free telephone helpline to families seeking practical support and guidance after losing a loved one.

The not-for-profit service provides impartial and caring advice on aspects such as registering a death, probate, bereavement benefits and Coroners' investigations. It also signposts to local sources of emotional support.

**Call the helpline on 0808 164 2239.**

# Supporting our communities



Our funeral teams provide a compassionate and supportive service in their professional lives. But many members are also actively involved in community roles outside the funeral home.

## Being a minister helps Sandra as a funeral arranger

Sandra Hagger, Funeral Arranger and Funeral Director at **A V Ridout Funeral Service** in Highcliffe, Dorset, became a Minister after finding Spiritualism helped both her personal and working life.

Sandra is now authorised to conduct weddings, funerals, blessings and visit prisons. This has given her a deeper understanding of people and their faiths, and she is now finding new ways of supporting them.

She said: "My ambition is to keep helping people, that was always my end-game and I try to do this both in my church work and also as a Funeral Arranger and Director."

Sandra said she loved being able to officiate a funeral she has arranged.

Sandra studied and passed Platform Accreditation Scheme (PAS) training and achieved both a Certificate (CSNU) and Diploma (DSNU) of the Spiritualists' National Union (SNU). She then spent five

years working within her religion as an Officiant, while training for another five years to become a Minister.

Sandra summarised: "Interestingly, being a Minister is not really that different for me from being an Officiant, the position just has more responsibility. It is lovely to know I have the backing of the Union and that they consider me worthy of my position, which brings me closer to people than ever before".



## Volunteering with youngsters

Brian Hartland is a Funeral Director at **HAVEN Funeral Services**, he enjoys the challenge of meeting the needs of a variety of clients in difficult circumstances.

Away from work Brian is actively involved in his local church, Ruislip Baptist Church. He is a keen volunteer with FUSE, a youth group for 11-14 years old, supporting

various activities every Thursday evening during term time.

Brian grew up in a similar youth group and feels it's very important to provide young people with good Christian role models, and now loves giving back as a funeral director within his own Church community.

Brian explained "It's nice to be able to provide a fun



and friendly safe environment for young people, the session integrates a bite sized element of religious discussion, but primarily provides an opportunity for young people to get together and socialise, in a safe environment.

"I have been involved with FUSE as a volunteer for about eight years now." FUSE also promotes inclusivity and has many members from outside the church community.

## Helping to save lives

Three team members at **Firmager Funeral Service** in Kent play a vital rescue role in their local community as volunteers with HM Coastguard, covering an area from Camber Sands to Folkestone.

Funeral Director Philip Tanner and Funeral Service Operatives Trevor Clark and Stuart Sayer have nearly ten years' service between them and are fully trained in rescue methods including mud, cliff, water and search and rescue.

Philip is a keen angler and said this inspired his interest in the sea. He explained: "If we aren't conducting a funeral then we're on call. We work closely with the Lifeboat station

and the police and it's great to support the community in this way.

"Although most of the calls are during evenings and weekends, we're grateful to Funeral Partners for allowing us to respond in work time."



Firmager's team of volunteer coastguards, from left, Stuart Sayer, Trevor Clark and Philip Tanner



# Your Choice, your peace of mind

**We all know there are a number of companies offering Prepaid Funeral Plans, all with varying options, prices and often lots of small print.**

So how do you choose which company to entrust this very important personal decision with, and be confident your wishes and money will be safe and secure?

Whilst we can't speak for all these other companies we can tell you about the significant benefits of purchasing a **Choice Prepaid Funeral Plan.**

Our aim is always to help you plan in as much, or as little, detail as you wish. We don't have rigid plan types to choose from, instead we take a flexible approach, as we believe every funeral is unique and our experienced staff are always happy to advise and provide ideas and options.

**Life Magazine  
Discount of £300 off  
is available until  
30 November 2019.**

**Quote: LIFE2019**

## What's your choice?



**We are always here to talk through options and pricing in more detail - we'd love to hear from you. Pop in to branch or call the Choice team on 01803 298 243 or email us at [info@choiceplan.co.uk](mailto:info@choiceplan.co.uk)**

- We have a large network of local funeral director branches throughout the UK, most of whom have been established for decades in their local community
- We are more than happy to discuss your plan in branch or we can visit you in the comfort of your own home which many of our customers prefer
- Our plan covers all the Funeral Director costs at today's prices so however much those costs go up over time, you secure and fix the price at the time of purchase
- Your invested funds are held independently with UK-based life assurance companies regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) so are completely secure
- You can express your wishes about any element of the service including transport, hymns and readings - all for safe keeping, so less worry for your loved ones during a difficult time
- Your personal wishes can be added to or amended at any time
- If you move house, your plan moves with you
- We are always here to offer support and advice to you and your family whether this is on the phone, in person, in the branch or via our independent free bereavement helpline.

As a business we pride ourselves on our services, so we try to keep the rules of our plans simple. There are no upper age limits, health screening and no financial credit checks and we offer a number of flexible ways to pay for your plan that include cash, cheque, credit card or monthly instalments calculated from 12 to 60 months to suit your budget.

We are members of NAFD, the National Association of Funeral Directors, the country's leading funeral trade association so you can be sure we adhere to strict regulations to protect you and your family.



# Thank you Letters

Our teams regularly receive messages of thanks from families they have helped. Here is a recent selection.

## Hemming & Peace Funeral Services, Warwickshire

Found dealing with Hemming & Peace so easy. They were so helpful in organising my dad's funeral and on the day itself, everything ran smoothly. i would definitely recommend them.

D, Leamington Spa

## Chambers & Brighty Funeral Directors, Wellingborough

We were very impressed with the helpfulness and compassion shown by all the staff. Such service merits the highest praise, special mention of Scott Kelly who we felt went the extra mile.

PN

## John G Hogg Funeral Directors, Sunderland

The whole process was dealt with in a totally professional manner from the start to the end. I would not hesitate to recommend this firm to anyone.

The booklet sent out weeks after the funeral was neither requested or expected but proved to be a very nice touch to remember my mother.

IM

## TW Boorman Funeral Services, Tonbridge

Tansy at Boorman's was an enormous support to us as a family when my mother died recently, as indeed she was when my father died a couple of years ago. First she liaised with the hospital to get paperwork released and then suggested that, since we were only planning a small service (18 people), we use Boorman's own pretty little chapel and the direct-to-crematorium option.

This gave us a wide choice of dates and times, Boorman's provided simple refreshments and we were able to organise our own music (although Boorman's also have music available). Moreover, since the chapel is in the heart of Tonbridge, our local friends could just walk there - so much easier than asking people to travel to Tunbridge Wells Crematorium. It was very special to be saying farewell to Mum so close to where we grew up.

## MM Broad & Son Funeral Directors, Barnet

At the most difficult time in my life, having to arrange the funeral of my beloved father, and not having an idea of where to start, I discovered this truly wonderful company. (I first decided on contacting them based on the online review I'd read, and then the following day a friend recommended them!)

From the moment my mother, daughter and I sat down with a most amazing human being named Kevin, through to the incredibly efficient and caring Kelly, to the Funeral Director himself and his team on the day of my dad's funeral, my family have felt we could not have been taken care of by a better organization.

MM Broad and Son were professional in every way, but what makes them 5 stars is that, as we met different members, they individually went the extra mile to ensure my wonderful dad's final journey was the one we wanted for him. I would recommend them without hesitation, and I am so very grateful for their service.



## Woking Funeral Service, Surrey

Woking Funeral Service are exceptional. From the first time of meeting Caitlin and going through the details, to the day of my mother's funeral and to the interment of her ashes - the attention to detail was extraordinary and I never had to worry about anything.

All members of Caitlin's team are professional, sensitive, respectful and beautifully dressed. In addition, we travelled in style to the funeral in the most luxurious and comfortable limousines. Thank you WFS - you made a difficult and challenging time so much easier and bearable.

## GH Dovener & Son Funeral Services, Leeds

I had used GH Dovener in 2015 for my mother's funeral. They were excellent then so it was an easy decision to use them again for my father's funeral. They did not let me down.

They were kind and considerate, anticipating issues and handling everything with wonderful empathy. They were very efficient and timely and there was no pressure exerted in relation to any of the options available. Everyone I spoke to was always briefed and fully aware of our needs and requirements.

PI

Our teams also regularly receive five-star Google reviews for their service, here are some recent ones.



### Steven Mears Funeral Directors, Sydenham

Fantastic company to deal with. Brilliant staff who understand the pain and suffering the customer is going through trying to lay their loved one to rest. The staff at the Sydenham branch went out of their way to accommodate us at all times.



### B Matthews Funeral Directors, Southampton

In such devastating circumstances I can't recommend their services highly enough. The staff are very professional and have the utmost respect for people experiencing the most difficult of times. I guarantee that anyone using this company won't be disappointed.



### Roy Quinton Funeral Directors, Bushbury

We cannot thank Debbie, Katie and all the staff at Quinton's Bushbury office enough for their help, patience and professionalism in organising Mom's beautiful funeral. They all showed an extremely sensitive and compassionate approach to us at this very sad time.

Nothing was too much trouble from ringing the musician for his music, giving us tissues in the West Chapel to showing great respect for Mom by walking in front of the hearse to leave her home and then again arriving at the West Chapel. We give you our heartfelt thanks.

Sue, Carol, Carol, Geoff and all the families



### Quinns of Greasby Funeral Directors

I cannot praise Quinns highly enough. I live in Australia and had very limited time to organise a funeral. Quinns took care of all the arrangements and everything went exceedingly well on the day.

Tina was a joy to deal with, and a great support - I had full confidence in her. Quinns have been of service to my family for over 30 years and have maintained their high standards and personal service.



### Wilton Funeral Services, Bournemouth

My family are so glad we chose them to conduct my mother's funeral, so professional, but so very kind and caring too, a very respectful and comforting service from them all.



Brian Langford (left) with Funeral Partners' Area Development Manager Keith Clegg. Photo: Peter Howarth Photography

## MELIA POWELL SUPPORTS KEIGHLEY COMMUNITY

Melia Powell Funeral Service hosted a fundraising open evening to celebrate its continuing commitment to the communities of Keighley, Skipton and Bradford.

The event at The Keighley Civic Centre gave members of the community a chance to ask questions and meet members of the Funeral Partners team.

Hosted by Business Principal and former owner Brian Langford, the open evening attracted 100 people, raising £150 for local organisation Roshni Ghar, which supports women experiencing mental health problems.

Brian arranged for the local Aroushe Café and Bingley St Ives Golf Club to cater for an evening supper while his daughter, a drama teacher at a local school, had her students sing songs from their production of Hairspray.

Brian said: "We got really good feedback. The businesses and people we work with got a chance to see that it is business as usual at Melia Powell, as well as helping a very important cause."

Recently the team has also spearheaded a litter pick and community clean-up with Keighley Town Council along the area known as The Twines.

Melia Powell's next fundraising event is a cabaret and dinner dance on 19 October in Skipton, for tickets and more information call 01274 567 110 or email [meliapowell.keighley@funeralpartners.co.uk](mailto:meliapowell.keighley@funeralpartners.co.uk).



## BARONESS REOPENS OLDEST BUSINESS ON STREATFIELD ROAD, HARROW

Rt. Hon Baroness Shami Chakrabarti CBE PC officially reopened the Harrow funeral home of **W H Putnam Funeral Directors** after extensive refurbishment.

The Harrow branch opened in the 1950s and is the oldest remaining business in the parade of shops on Streatfield Road, where third generation Funeral Director Keith Putnam and his sister Alana grew up living above the premises.

To mark the refurbishment of the branch, Funeral Arranger Samantha Wright invited members of the local community to the re-opening. Baroness Chakrabarti, who was born and brought up in Harrow, cut the ribbon and Monsignor Martin Hayes,

Vicar General of Westminster Diocese, blessed the chapel of rest.

Long-serving Funeral Director Tom Joyce, a school friend of Keith Putnam, said: "Although Streatfield Road has seen many changes, W H Putnam continues to provide the same level of care to local families. They are welcome to pop in for a chat, have a look around our new facilities or find out anything they need to know about arranging a funeral."

The branch's refurbishment has provided improved facilities to care for families, including an extended reception area, comfortable arranging room and extended chapel of rest.



## MANY BLESSINGS FOR JOHN NODES

Mayor of Brent, Councillor Arshad Mahmood, cut the ribbon as the team from **John Nodes Funeral Service** in Kensal Rise celebrated the re-opening of their extensively refurbished funeral home.

They were joined by Roman Catholic and Anglican priests and civil celebrants, with their chapel of rest being blessed by Monsignor Roger Reader and Father David Ackerman from St John's, Kensal Green.

Funeral Arranger Bernadette Barrett,

who organised the re-opening with Funeral Arranger Sandra Maiden, is delighted with the branch's new look: "What a transformation. It's all open plan and we have a new arranging area. It feels more friendly and welcoming and we have already had positive comments from visitors. We would like to invite members of our community to call in to meet the team and see our new facilities."

John Nodes Funeral Service has been serving its local communities in North Kensington, Kensal Rise, Cricklewood and Harlesden for nearly 200 years and the team continue this tradition.

For more information about all the funeral homes in the Funeral Partners family visit [www.funeralpartners.co.uk](http://www.funeralpartners.co.uk) or contact Head of Marketing Kelly Hailou: [Kelly.Hailou@funeralpartners.co.uk](mailto:Kelly.Hailou@funeralpartners.co.uk)

We welcome your feedback and comments about this issue of Life magazine, or if you would like to contribute, please get in touch with Gemma Taylor, Community & Communications Manager: [Gemma.Taylor@funeralpartners.co.uk](mailto:Gemma.Taylor@funeralpartners.co.uk)